

## CAUCASIA AND CENTRAL ASIA

of Germany, whether by way of Moscow or through Krasnovodsk and the Caucasus.<sup>13</sup>

These two quotations testify eloquently enough to the alarm with which the British viewed the consequences of the Bolshevik Revolution and the Brest-Litovsk Treaty in Central Asia. The German-Austrian prisoners in the area added about 200,000 armed men to the Red Army units and the Communist nuclei directed by the Tashkent Soviet. Together they constituted a force that the British, even with their proverbial self-control, could hardly underestimate. To cope with this difficult situation the British government dispatched two military missions to Turkestan. The first and larger expedition under Major-General Sir Wilfred Malleson, was sent to Transcaspia, in reply to the call for aid from the anti-Communist government at Ashkhabad. It was soon enlarged by regular Indian army units, which co-operated with the Ashkhabad troops against the Tashkent Red Army and their German-Austrian allies. To secure liaison with their Indian base a separate command was established in Iran, under the official name of the East Persian Line of Communications but unofficially known as the East Persian Cordon. This cordon had been in existence before the Russian Revolution, and had been divided into the northern (Russian) and southern (British) sectors. The dividing point between the tsarist armies and the British-Indian troops had been the town of Birjand, relatively deep within Iran from the Russian border. The aim of the original cordon had been to constitute a second line of defense against any Turko-German military thrust or infiltration through northern Iran toward Afghanistan.

istan, Russian Central Asia, or India. After the Bolshevik Revolution the Russian troops "melted away" and the responsibility of guarding the whole length of the line became British. Now, however, that an anti-Communist and, therefore, anti-German center of resistance was set up in Ashkhabad, the Cordon had to serve also as a link between the British troops in Transcaspia and India.<sup>14</sup>

is L. V. S. Blacker, *On Secret Patrol in High Asia* (John Murray, London, 1922), pp. 5-6. Reprinted by permission of the author.

i\* A detailed description of the work of the East Persian Cordon Command may be found in *East Persia, a Backwater of the Great War*, by Brigadier-General W. E. R. Dickson (London, 1924).